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EXAMINER

LE, MIRANDA

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

2167

DATE MAILED: 02/17/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

10/027,195

Applicant(s)

TUNKELANG, DANIEL

Examiner

Miranda Le

Art Unit

2167

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --  
**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 01 December 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-41 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 40 and 41 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-39 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)  | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)  | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)             |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>09/23/05, 03/04/05</u> | 6) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: <u>IDS#07/19/04, 10/28/02</u>             |

**DETAILED ACTION**

1. This communication is responsive to Amendment filed 12/01/2005.
2. Claims 1-39 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 31, 32, 33, 38 are independent claims. In the Amendment, no claims have been added, amended, or cancelled. This action is made Final.

***Information Disclosure Statement***

3. Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement, filed 10/28/2002, 07/19/2004, 03/04/2005, 09/23/2005, have been received, entered into the record, and considered. See attached form PTO-1449.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless:

(e) the invention was described in

(1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or

(2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

5. Claims 1-9, 12, 15-23, 25-27, 31-34 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Smith et al. (US Patent No. 6,853,982 B2).

Smith anticipated independent claims 1, 31-33, 38, by the following:

**As to claims 1, 33,** Smith teaches a method for searching a collection of items, wherein each item in the collection has a set of properties, comprising the steps of: obtaining a query composed of a first set of one or more properties (i.e. set of ITEM\_A, ITEM\_C ..., which belongs to query, Fig. 3B, col. 18, lines 14-24), col. 18, lines 14-45, col. 20, lines 34-44);

obtaining a result (i.e.  $N_{common}$ , that is the number of sessions in which both ITEM\_A and ITEM\_B were viewed, col. 19, lines 21-24) based on applying a distance function (i.e.  $N_{common}$ , col. 19, line 23) to the query and an item (i.e. SESSION\_B, Fig. 3B) in the collection (i.e. database 38, Fig. 1) having a second set of one or more properties (i.e. the set of ITEM\_C, ITEM\_D..., which belongs to SESSION\_B, Fig. 3B), col. 18, lines 8-67, col. 20, lines 6-33),

wherein obtaining a result includes determining a third set of properties (i.e. both ITEM\_A and ITEM\_B were viewed, col. 19, lines 21-24) common to the first set of one or more properties and the second set of one or more properties are in common between the query (Fig. 3B, col. 18, line 58 to col. 19, line 27);

the distance function determines a distance between the query and an item in the collection based on the number of items in the collection that are associated with all of the properties in the third set of properties (i.e.  $N_{common}$ , that is the number of sessions in which both ITEM\_A and ITEM\_B were viewed, col. 19, lines 21-24), (col. 19, line 29 to col. 20, line 33).

**As per claim 31,** Smith teaches a method for analyzing two sets of properties from a plurality of sets of properties, comprising the steps of: determining a set of properties common to the two sets of properties (col. 19, lines 8-63);

determining the number of sets of properties from the plurality of sets of properties that include the set of common properties (col. 19, lines 8-63);

assessing the distance between the two sets of properties as a function of the number of sets of properties (i.e. the tables after modifying) that include the set of common properties (col. 18, line 59 to col. 19, line 63).

**As per claim 32**, Smith teaches a method for analyzing the relationship between two items in a collection of items, wherein each item in the collection is associated with a set of properties, comprising the steps of obtaining a set of properties with which the two items are commonly associated (col. 18, line 59 to col. 19, line 27);

determining the degree of commonality between the two items as a function of the number of items in the collection that are associated with all of the properties with which the two items are commonly associated (col. 19, line 29 to col. 20, line 33).

**As per claim 38**, Smith teaches a computer system for managing data records comprising: an information retrieval subsystem that stores and retrieves data records, each data record being associated with a set of properties (col. 18, lines 15-67);

a similarity search subsystem that receives similarity search queries and processes similarity search queries based on a distance function, a similarity search query being associated with a first set of properties (col. 19, lines 1-63);

wherein the distance function determines a distance between the query and a data record in the collection having a second set of properties based on determining a third set of properties

common to the first set of properties and the second set of properties, and determining the number of data records in the collection that are associated with all of the properties in the third set of properties (col. 19, line 29 to col. 20, line 33).

**As per claim 2**, Smith teaches the step of associating each item in the collection with a set of properties (col. 19, lines 1-63, see Table 2, col. 19).

**As per claim 3**, Smith teaches the step of obtaining a result includes identifying one or more result items whose distance from the query is within a first threshold (col. 18, lines 46-49, col. 19, lines 53-63).

**As per claim 4**, Smith teaches the step of obtaining a result includes ranking the one or more result items according to their distance from the query (col. 19, lines 53-63, col. 20, lines 21-33).

**As per claim 5**, Smith teaches the threshold is defined as a number of result items (col. 18, lines 35-57, col. 20, lines 6-33).

**As per claim 6**, Smith teaches the threshold is defined as a distance (col. 19, lines 53-63, col. 20, lines 21-33).

**As per claim 7**, Smith teaches the step of returning the result (col. 18, line 28 to col. 19, line 27).

**As per claim 8**, Smith teaches the step of obtaining a query includes the step of mapping a received query to a set of one or more properties (col. 15, lines 9-28, col. 20, line 34 to col. 21, line 33).

**As per claim 9**, Smith teaches one or more of the properties are binary (col. 22, lines 54-67).

**As per claim 12**, Smith teaches the properties are grouped into equivalence classes (i.e. sessions, col. 18, lines 14-45, col. 20, lines 34-44).

**As per claim 15**, Smith teaches the query corresponds to a single item (item\_A, item\_B, Fig. 3B) in the collection (col. 18, lines 14-45, col. 20, lines 34-44).

**As per claim 16**, Smith teaches the query corresponds to a plurality of items in the collection (col. 18, lines 14-45, col. 20, lines 34-44).

**As per claim 17**, Smith teaches the query (item\_A, item\_B) is independent of the items in the collection (popular\_A, popular\_B, col. 18, lines 14-45, col. 20, lines 34-44).

**As per claim 18**, Smith teaches the step of obtaining a result is constrained to a subcollection of the items in the collection (col. 18, lines 35-45, col. 30, lines 42-64).

**As per claim 19**, Smith teaches the subcollection is specified as an expression of properties (i.e. sessions in which items are viewed, col. 18, lines 14-45, col. 20, lines 34-44).

**As per claim 20**, Smith teaches the expression includes a subset of the set of properties that compose the query (col. 30, lines 42-64).

**As per claim 21**, Smith specifically teaches the step of obtaining a query includes identifying certain properties to be ignored in the step of obtaining a result (col. 18, lines 35-45, col. 26, line 64 to col. 27, line 32, col. 30, lines 5-64).

**As per claim 22**, Smith teaches the distance function is applied explicitly (col. 19, lines 1-63, col. 30, lines 42-52).

**As per claim 23**, Smith teaches the distance function is applied implicitly (col. 19, lines 1-63, col. 30, lines 42-52).

**As per claim 25**, Smith teaches the step of obtaining a result includes ranking the potential result items by frequency and selecting the potential result items having higher frequencies (col. 20, lines 6-46, col. 20, lines 64 to col. 21, line 33).



**As per claim 26**, Smith teaches the step of obtaining a result includes iterating through one or more subsets of the query and identifying items associated with the one or more subsets (col. 30, lines 5-34, col. 26, line 64 to col. 27, line 8).

**As per claim 27**, Smith teaches the one or more subsets are prioritized according to the number of items in the collection that have all of the properties in each subset and wherein iterating through one or more subsets of the query is continued until a first threshold is reached (col. 19, lines 1-63, col. 18, lines 46-58).

**As per claim 34**, Smith teaches the instructions cause the computer to obtain a result by identifying exactly the items whose distance from the query is within a threshold (col. 20, lines 6-9, col. 19, lines 29-63, Fig. 4).

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

7. Claims 10-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith et al. (US Patent No. 6,853,982 B2), in view of Fish et al. (US Patent No. 6,035,294).

**As per claim 10**, Smith does not specifically teach one or more of the properties are related by a partial order, and wherein, if an item is associated with a property, then the item is also associated with all ancestors of that property in the partial order. Fish teaches this limitation at col. 4, lines 28-64, Figs. 3B-C.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine the cited references because Fish's teaching of displaying information relating to the usage with which data values have historically been used with particular parameters in describing specific types of items would have allowed Smith's users to automatically identify items that are related to one another based on the activities of a community of users and to efficiently recommend products to a user based on the searches recently conducted by the user.

**As per claim 11**, Fish teaches one or more of the properties represent numerical values or ranges, and wherein the partial order reflects a set of containment relationships among the numerical values or ranges (col. 7, line 65 to col. 8, line 2).

8. Claims 13-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith et al. (US Patent No. 6,853,982 B2), in view of Tso et al. (US Patent No. 6,385,602 B1).

**As per claim 13**, Smith, Fish do not explicitly teach the step of grouping the properties into equivalence classes using clustering. However, Tso teaches this limitation at col. 4, lines 42-55.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine the cited references because Tso's suggestion of determining candidate categories, final categories based upon the candidate categories and assigning the matching data items to the final categories are collectively referred to as clustering would have allowed Smith's users to obtain a large number of matching data items in an organized manner.

**As per claim 14**, Smith teaches each property has a set of subproperties, wherein the clustering is performed such that the distance between two properties in the collection is correlated to the number of properties in the collection that are associated with all of the subproperties common to both properties (col. 15, line 46 to col. 16, line 40).

9. Claims 24, 28-30, 35-37, 39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith et al. (US Patent No. 6,853,982 B2), in view of Kortge et al. (US Patent No. 6,446,068 B1).

**As per claim 24**, Smith does not specifically teach the step of obtaining a result includes the step of iterating a random walk process to select potential result items. However, Kortge teaches this limitation at col. 10, lines 49-61, col. 14, lines 46-54.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine the cited references because Kortge's teaching the step of obtaining a result includes the step of iterating a random walk process to select potential result items would have allowed Smith's users to find a near neighbor to a query with fewer distance computations and can make use of previous search result to speed up subsequent searches on similar queries.

**As per claim 28**, Smith does not expressly teach the step of obtaining a result includes applying a Euclidean distance function. However, Kortge teaches this limitation at col. 8, lines 7-12.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine the cited references because Kortge's teaching the step of obtaining a result includes applying a Euclidean distance function would have allowed Smith's users to find a near neighbor to a query with fewer distance computations and can make use of previous search result to speed up subsequent searches on similar queries.

**As per claim 29**, Kortge teaches the step of obtaining a result includes merging a first result determined by applying the distance function and a second result determined by applying the Euclidean distance function (col. 8, lines 5-12).

**As per claim 30**, Kortge teaches the step of obtaining a result includes determining a first result by applying either the distance function or the Euclidean distance function and applying the other distance function to the first result (col. 8, lines 5-12).

**As per claim 35**, Smith does not expressly teach the instructions cause the computer to obtain a result by identifying approximately the items whose distance from the query is within a threshold according to a heuristic. However, Kortge teaches this limitation at col. 6, lines 27-46.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine the cited references because Kortge's teaching the step of the instructions cause the

computer to obtain a result by identifying approximately the items whose distance from the query is within a threshold according to a heuristic would have allowed Smith's users to find a near neighbor to a query with fewer distance computations and can make use of previous search result to speed up subsequent searches on similar queries.

**As per claim 36**, Kortge teaches the heuristic permits a trade-off between the accuracy and the performance of a search (col. 6, lines 27-46).

**As per claim 37**, Kortge teaches the heuristic includes the use of a random walk process (col. 10, lines 49-61, col. 14, lines 46-54).

**As per claim 39**, Smith does not specifically teach a clustering subsystem that employs the distance function of the similarity search subsystem to construct a graph. However, Kortge teaches this limitation at col. 9, lines 10-45, Fig. 5.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine the cited references because Kortge's teaching the step of a clustering subsystem that employs the distance function of the similarity search subsystem to construct a graph would have allowed Smith's users to find a near neighbor to a query with fewer distance computations and can make use of previous search result to speed up subsequent searches on similar queries.

*Response to Arguments*

10. Applicant's arguments filed 12/01/2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

The Examiner has thoroughly reviewed Applicants' arguments but firmly believes that the cited reference reasonably and properly meet the claimed limitation. Applicants are reminded that the Examiner is entitled to give the broadest reasonable interpretation to the language of the claimed as explained below. The Examiner is not limited to Applicants' definition which is not specifically set forth in the claims. In *re Tanaka et al.*, 193 USPQ 139, (CCPA) 1977.

Firstly, Applicant seems to be suggesting that the references fail to show certain features of applicant's invention, however, it is noted that the features upon which applicant relies (i.e., the distance function determines a distance between a query and an item based on how common it is for items to share the properties that the query and the item share, i.e. in addition to the item with the second set of properties...) are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

Secondly, in response to Applicant's argument that the Smith reference does not teach the claim 1 limitation, which are the three set of properties, and the distance function between the query and item in the collection. It is noted that the Examiner interprets the item (as recited in claim 1) corresponds to the session (in the Smith reference), and the properties (as recited in claim 1) corresponds to the items (in the Smith reference). For example as shown in table 302A of Fig. 3B, the item "SESSION\_A" has properties as: ITEM\_A, ITEM\_C ...

The first set of properties, thereafter set A, is the set of ITEM\_A, ITEM\_C ..., which belongs to query (Fig. 3B).

The second set of properties, thereafter set B, is the set of ITEM\_C, ITEM\_D..., which belongs to SESSION\_B (Fig. 3B).

Note that “an item in the collection has a second set of properties” correspond to SESSION\_B in the database 38 (Fig. 1) having a set of ITEM\_C, ITEM\_D...

Smith teaches the step of computing the  $N_{\text{common}}$ , that is the number of sessions (i.e. number of items as recited in claim 1) in which both ITEM\_A and ITEM\_B (i.e. the third set of properties) were viewed (col. 19, lines 21-24).

It is also noted that Smith teaches the step of computing the number of session that common to both items (col. 19, lines 16-19), which corresponds the number of items (i.e. number of sessions) in the collection (i.e. database 38 in Fig. 1) that are associated with all the properties in the third set of properties (i.e. ITEM\_A and ITEM\_B).

Furthermore, according to the present invention, the step of computing the distance between a query is explained as “Only these two movies share all these properties, hence, the distance between the two movies is 2” (Specification, pages 14, line 25-28). Thus, the concept “the distance between the query and an item” and “the distance between the two items” could be interchangeable. This should be understood that a set of properties belonging to a query represents an items, wherein the set of properties belonging to the item (i.e. A query can be specified in terms of a particular item or group of items, or in term of a set of properties, See Specification, page 15, lines 8-10).

Smith teaches a query composing of a set of properties (i.e. ITEM\_A, ITEM\_C ...), that representing an item (i.e. SESSION\_A, Fig. 3B), and the step of computing the number of items (i.e. number of session) in the collection that are associated with all of the properties in the third set of properties (i.e. ITEM\_A and ITEM\_B were viewed). This is understood as a distance between two items.

Therefore, the Smith system cannot be distinguished from the claims invention since Smith teaches all such elements as discussed above.

### *Conclusion*

11. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Miranda Le whose telephone number is (571) 272-4112. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jean Homere, Esq., can be reached on (571) 272-3780. The fax number to this Art Unit is 571-273-8300.



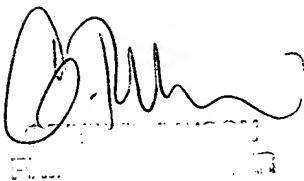
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Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 305-3900.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



Miranda Le  
February 07, 2006



B. P. [unclear]  
February 07, 2006